

**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH & EXCHANGES BOARD  
USAID INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS PROJECT**

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**IPP Technical Evaluation**

**US Partner:** Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB) and others

**NIS Partner:** Citizens Foundation (CF)

**Location of site visits:** Citizens Foundation Offices and Training Facilities, Moscow

**Date of Visits:** October 18, 22 and 24, 1996

**Date Report submitted to IREX:** November 12, 1996

Evaluator met with:

Igor Kokarev, President  
Kirill Zenerikov, Partnership Program Director, Trainer  
Elena Kudriavtseva, Volunteer, Trainer  
Gillian Kaye, American Training Specialist, CIDC  
Susan Wefald, Training Specialist,  
Attendees, Train the Trainer Workshops

A. Discuss the strongest aspects of the technical and professional work being done by this partnership.

1. Citizens Foundation (CF) has, with the help of its American partners, developed a professionally functioning office. There is a division of labor, filing system, and essential office equipment. There are procedures for assisting clients, recording visits, computerizing necessary data and returning telephone calls on a timely basis. The organization is served by both volunteers and paid staff.
2. CF has been seeing growing respect as a resource center for citizen groups and nongovernment organizations. Those who have received training and consulting assistance from CF have been its best advertisement, leading others to seek out its assistance.
3. Training seminars have been successful. CF has acquired a good reputation which, as stated above, has expanded by word of mouth. The Training for Trainers success is demonstrated by the

fact that all former students have continued working and volunteering for the organization. This means their experience is growing and CF is benefiting from increasingly more experienced and skilled trainers.

4. With its American partners' assistance, CF successfully spun-off the Neopolimovka Community Center, and now offers assistance to the group and works hand in hand with it. This also has helped CF grow beyond a focus on the immediate neighborhood. This is essential for CF to become a citywide, regional or even national organization, which is critical to its sustainability.

5. The President, Igor Kokarev, is a strong advocate, and inspirational leader. His charisma and energy have created and fueled a "ministry" of grassroots democracy. This is one of several models for a successful, long lasting organization. The problem is, this leadership style creates its own unique set of challenges for any organization. Among those are: sudden changes in focus, failure to delegate authority and responsibility, and inability to retain talented staff. UHAB has done an excellent job addressing these potential and real weaknesses and assisting the President in taking steps to improve on those areas.

6. Training modules developed by CF and the American partners are generally excellent. This will be discussed further in Training, below.

7. CF has targeted work in five Moscow communities. This targeted, clustering approach makes sense. It allows CF to build on its successes within the community and appreciate the spin off of community improvements in its subsequent efforts.

Discuss the weakest aspects of technical and professional work being done by this partnership.

1. With the end of financial support from this grant, CF will be without any significant outside funding. Some efforts have been made by the American Partners to build relationships between CF and possible funding sources but little success has occurred to date. Too little attention was paid to developing a realistic financial development plan, cognizant of the realities of the Russian economy and culture for giving. In addition, too little time remains for the Citizen Academy to achieve a broad enough exposure to a large enough market to generate sufficient revenue to sustain the partner organizations. In their visits to the US, the Russian participants noted that they were told about the importance of fundraising and foundation support, but that the nonprofit organizations they visited, received, on average about 80% of their funding from government. Their perspective is, "how can we be expected to live on generated income and foundation support when the American nonprofits cannot even survive without extensive government support."

2. Two Russian participants in the delegations to the United States shared concerns with the evaluator. They felt the programs did not focus sufficiently on the Russian context. As a result, attendees could not see the relevancy of some training and site visits. They also felt they had not been exposed enough to community organizers, though they did say they understood this was not a problem in an earlier visit by a Russian delegation. They did speak highly of their visit to a small town in Massachusetts. There they felt the work was more analogous to their own efforts. They

were impressed with the way different types of organizations and the local government were working closely together. They singled out one woman, Debra McLaughlin, for praise in the job she did as an organizer. They were also impressed that the group even had materials translated into Russian.

In highlighting another area where a lack of Russian context was shown, they mentioned the American focus of primarily working with and benefiting low income citizens. In New York City, they observed, there are neighborhoods that are inhabited almost exclusively by low income residents of one ethnic group. Many of their site visits in New York focused on groups working with these neighborhoods, and poor people. However, they explained, Moscow is different. For the most part, neighborhoods are economically integrated. Even the average building will have a wealthy new Russian living next door to a poor widow barely surviving on a small pension and down the hall from a young Russian family on an average income. They also explained that there is only one ethnic group in Moscow that is segregated geographically, and that is the Oriental community. They did express that they learned a great deal about nonprofit program management from the visit, and also learned the importance of lobbying the city and developing connections with the city.

3. There has been a problem with the organization staying focused on a primary task and maintaining an effort over time. An example of this is a grant with the Eurasia Foundation. Funds were frozen largely because tasks were not being completed on schedule. This is a problem many Russian NGOs are having. The time demands of granting or contracting sources is a new concept for many of these workers. The American partners worked closely with the Eurasia Foundation to resolve the problem.

4. CF and clients have disagreed on CF's mission. Increasingly, residents see empowerment as coming through control of their living situation. Most Muscovites live in government-owned housing. Maintenance is generally slow and of poor quality. Frequently there are problems with water and hot and heating water, which is largely on centralized systems. CF has not seen itself as a "housing organization" but has come to accept that it must operate in this realm to meet the needs of its clients. This further suggests CF may need to revisit its mission and strategies.

#### Recommendations for Improvement

1. Financial stability recommendations will be addressed under Part F., sustainability.

2. Russian delegation visits to the US: Those planning for these visits need to be more cognizant of the Russian situation and attempt to provide instruction that contextualizes the site visits or training. Also site visits highlighting community organizing and housing should be planning to nonprofit groups working with more economically and ethnically integrated communities. Of course, visits highlighting management styles, fundraising or programmatic successes could be from any community.

Generally, the American partner staff working with CF in Russia is aware of the Russian context and understands the unique aspects of the Russian setting.

3. The American partners should work more closely with CF in helping them develop methods for assuring that projects stay on schedule, that the organization is remaining on track and adhering to its strategic plan. This should include physical aids such as wall charts, project progress thermometers and tracking charts, that help in communicating what progress is being made by all the participants in a multifaceted effort. They should also provide management training and consulting for those who, through their management must stay "on message" and on schedule.

4. The American partners should help CF revisit its mission statement, strategic and work plans. This should be done, first, to incorporate the realities of the financial situation, future fundraising needs, and generally to elevate the importance of sustainability.

Second, it should be done to consider the message the organization is receiving from its clientele. This could be facilitated through surveying, focus groups or planning sessions including clients. In meeting with the President, the evaluator heard many goals: increasing volunteerism, teaching compromise through conflict resolution, expanding grassroots democracy, teaching NGOs how to operate and, assisting people in organizing to accomplish a goal. It was apparent that these concepts, all critically important, were not prioritized or given a hierarchy within the context of the organization. This needs to be done, and then programs and fundraising strategies designed within this context.

B. What do the Russian partners see as the "criteria for success" for their partnership project activities? How close are they to attaining them?

1. The first answer to this question has been getting the Citizens Academy up and running. This occurred during the evaluator's visits. The Academy now has quality training facilities, qualified trainers but no marketing plan.

2. Second, they see sustainability through financial support as the primary criterion. This is not in place, and CF is not confident it can operate beyond its funding termination date under this program in the Spring of 1997. American partners have attempted to attract foundation support, but a more holistic fundraising plan needs to be developed. This will be discussed in more detail under Part F., Sustainability.

#### Recommendations for Improvement

1. The American partners should assist CF and All National Fund (ANF) in developing a marketing plan for the Citizens Academy. This marketing plan should address increasing the market for the Academy, assembling mailing lists, scheduling the dates for market expansion throughout European and then Asian Russia. It should also include some level of surveying to determine what the market wants and is willing to pay. Then a budget should be developed.

C. Describe the technical merit and appropriateness of the following program components:

## 1. Training

Evaluator observed the Training for Trainers workshop and the subsequent sessions delivered by the newly trained trainers.

The American training specialists, Gillian Kaye and Susan Wefald, presented the four-day workshop. They trained through an interpreter. They utilized a 3-part method: hear, see, do. That is teaching a lesson, providing examples or anecdotes, and offering opportunity for class participation or practice. This is one of the most successful methods in training and worked very successfully in this workshop.

Both Gillian and Susan, though utilizing very different personal delivery styles, were able to relate well with the trainees. Though they were speaking through an interpreter, they were able to communicate effectively through body language, parables, and an understanding of the Russian context. Despite the language barrier, they were able to encourage and achieve a give-and-take class participation.

Participants were divided into small groups and even sat in groups during the presentations. This is far superior to a classroom setup, with rows of chairs. It allows for a more relaxed environment and greater participation.

This participatory approach is relatively new to Russia, and has been very well received throughout the country.

The use of varied teaching methods, skits, puzzles, drawing, brainstorming, and quizzes energized the participants and the presenters. The use and posting of newsprint paper for recording the class's collective work enabled the class to refer back to previous work at any time, just by looking around the room for the information they need.

The training materials were thorough and provided detailed, accurate training theory and practical information for the participants. More graphics would have enhanced the package, however, and it was a bit heavy with material. Sometimes less can be better.

At the beginning of the workshop, one highly successful step was identifying ground rules with the group. This was popular and helped to avoid wasting time or misunderstandings.

One key rule in training is to know your audience and adapt your presentation accordingly. Gillian and Susan were able to do this with little or no visible disruption.

When the participants got their turn to train, after 3 and + days of instruction, they were prepared. They followed the example and lessons they had learned. They encountered some confusion on the part of participants from time to time that was largely caused by their inexperience. However the new trainers recovered gracefully and moved on.

At times the trainers reverted to old ways, lecturing a little too long, not encouraging participation, but this was more the exception than the rule.

One element of the "hear, see, do" method, seeing, or telling an illustrative story or parable was missing. This was due primarily to inexperience, but should have been emphasized more in the training.

The new trainers, however demonstrated an understanding of the principles and techniques of training they had been taught. They utilized newsprint, divided the class into groups, set up ground rules at the beginning, conducted an icebreaker to get people interacting, and stimulated active participation once the group was comfortable with them.

### Recommendations for Improvement

The training sessions were excellent. The recommendations offered here are relatively minor though helpful observations.

a. the use of audio-video materials can enhance a presentation, make it possible to present certain kinds of materials and break up the routine of newsprint. This, of course is not essential, just more effective.

b. one technique that is helpful is to have a class "parking lot." What that means is that if anyone wants to bring up or suggest a topic or discussion at a time that may not be appropriate, it can be put in the parking lot for later consideration. The parking lot is simply a page of newsprint taped to the wall and labeled parking lot. It is also helpful when a discussion has taken too much time, but several members of the group want to continue it. The topic can be placed in the parking lot to remind and assure the group that it will not be ignored or forgotten.

c. Voice training is helpful. When you are feeling stressed, the pitch of your voice goes up. This can be more of a problem for women trainers than men, but affects both. Breathing deeply several times can help relax the vocal cords and lower the pitch. Also, lowering the head slightly slackens the vocal chords and lowers the pitch. Several of the new trainers, men and women, had this pitch problem.

d. As was stated, though not emphatically enough in the Trainer Training, whenever you can draw a picture, draw a picture to explain something or present an example. A picture is worth a thousand words. When we all see the picture, we all see basically the same thing, unlike words and expressions, that can often conjure different images among a group of people hearing the same message.

## 2. Products

How-to manuals:

The how-to manuals for community organizing and housing have been drafted and are ready to be printed. They are comprehensive and based largely on the training materials. In addition, CF has how-to manuals drafted on other related topics. The problem presented to the evaluator is that CF does not have the funds to print the manuals. Also, Igor Kokarev said he was concerned that the manuals if printed as presently laid out, would not be in an effective format, and would not be well received. Evaluator noted that the how-to manuals seemed to contain an excessive amount of information and lacked graphics and layout style that would make them easy to read and understand.

## Community Organizing Training Module

The community organizing module was well written and structured. The approach to teaching the concept made sense, and the materials to be presented were comprehensive. The training design incorporated many of the successful techniques mentioned above. It provides succinct and relevant advice to the trainer in each section of the module. All essential elements of community organizing are touched upon. This module could be adapted to other organizations and utilized in other areas of Russia and the NIS in light of the below mentioned items.

### Recommendations for Improvement

1. How-to Manuals seem more effective with reader prompting questions, such as filling in a list of items, writing a goal statement, and listing your organization's assets, for example. Also, the use of graphics, diagrams and drawings or photographs greatly enhance the effectiveness of the manual not only to hold the interest of the reader, but also to communicate the information in a more understandable format.

### 2. The Community Organizing Training Module

- a. A missing element in the module, and one the evaluator considers critically important, is having the would-be organizers conduct a heartfelt assessment of their goals for the organizing effort. This should be a time to identify the primary goals of the effort, and identify a vision of the end result. This will help keep the effort focused and achieve a directed rather than diffused effort.

- b. In the "Star Power" exercise, there are bad guys and good guys. A message or lesson is "the haves" are the bad guys. The principle being expressed is that community organizing involves dealing with more powerful forces. This notion of the haves being bad guys may not relate well with the Russian culture. It is more attuned to an urban activist American mentality. In Russia, the government owns nearly all the land and housing, the government makes the rules. Therefore, the government is the object of reform efforts. A refreshing feature of Russian community organizing and citizen efforts is that it is primarily focused on the positives of working together to accomplish good, not on a concept of fighting the ever present evil, which is "whoever has more."

c. The training module calls for an up front survey to determine the neighborhood or building residents' concern. This is excellent and should be duplicated in other modules. This surveying to determine opinion is somewhat new to present day Russia.

d. Under Action Plan implementation, it would be valuable to suggest that single goal, finite life teams, rather than committees be assembled to carry out each element of the plan.

e. Scenarios presented in the module tend to present reactive rather than proactive situations, such as the Star Power and the mission statement exercises. A proactive focus would allow for more creative exercises.

f. The "pie wheel" exercise calls for the participants to identify the different ethnic groups and where they live in the neighborhood. This may not be an effective or beneficial exercise in Russia where the population tends to be more homogeneous and differences tend to be limited to age or income level. These groups, for the most part, are integrated throughout nearly all communities.

### 3. Resource and Learning Centers

CF has a fine training area. It is large enough for training and is equipped with enough tables and chairs to allow for a flexible arrangement in presentations and for break out groups. Access to the room is from the back. Therefore, there is not the visual disturbance of a late arrival entering the room.

#### Recommendations for Improvement

There is an office behind a divider which is a distraction, as people come and go, and noises can be heard. Also, the wall clock should be moved to the back of the room. That way it will not be distracting the class, but will be visible to the trainers, helping them to stay on schedule.

### 4. Consulting Services

N/A

#### Recommendations for Improvement

D. What additional technical assistance do you believe the Russian side could use to improve their work in general?

As mentioned above, the organization needs to revisit its mission statement and strategies in light of increasing client interest in housing related issues, and with the knowledge that financial stability is not guaranteed, and the organization needs to make financial survival a key focus and element that touch all the activities of the organization. CF must be helped in adapting the organization to these new realities.



E. What new directions do you see as a natural follow-up for this project? Are there others working in this sector that this group might contact and/or collaborate with?

As the clients increasingly call for more housing related organizing assistance, CF needs to explore what would be most empowering for these residents. They might work closely with the Urban Institute in Moscow, to introduce residents to building ownership options, the most empowering move for residents of city-owned buildings. CF also needs to expand its services to assist housing organizations in the city with organizing needs.

CF should consider taking its training to other cities in Russia. This would expand its work to the national level and provide financial benefits to the organization.

CF needs to be taught fundraising planning and implementation strategies and techniques. These need to be tailored to the unique situation in Russia, where there is only a small charitable community of givers.

F. How do you assess the partnership's sustainability plan? What is your sense of how close the partners will be to meeting these goals?

The sustainability plan includes several elements beneficial toward future services, such as development of modules and training trainers for the Citizens Academy. It also discusses techniques that have been developed for client assistance and organizing. But the sustainability plan fails to address how the organization will obtain the funds necessary to sustain itself.

Revenue from workshops will be inadequate to support the Citizens Academy or CF. This may change as the Academy's reputation grows and the national economy improves, but at present the Academy has little market exposure and the attendees are generally lower income and lack the ability to pay very much for the training.

Charging fees for client consultation is also problematic. Few clients have the financial capacity to pay much for the assistance.

Grants are few and come primarily from Western nations. The Russian tradition of charitable giving has been crippled by 70 years of Soviet rule. Reestablishing this tradition will take time and much work. CF will need to nurture this effort before it can benefit from its efforts.

During discussions, the President explained to the evaluator that the US AID funding had enabled CF to hire and train staff to carry out the work of the organization. However once that funding is terminated, they do not see a way to pay for the additional staff and will be forced to terminate their employment. The President feels this would be a terrible waste of the funds that have been invested in developing this capacity in the organization. In light of this, and the above-mentioned factors, the evaluator warns that CF will be unable to continue carrying out its mission as presently constituted once funding is concluded unless alternative funding sources can be tapped in the next several months. Loss of the staff would significantly reduce the scope of work the organization can perform, which could lead to the collapse of the organization.

The design of this program, to fund and set up Russian organizations without, at the same time, preparing them for financial stability after the grant support ends, is ill conceived and potentially damaging to the original goals of the program. USAID should take an active role in persuading the city leaders of Moscow to provide some level of support for the organizations fostered by American assistance and financial support. The national government should also be encouraged to do the same. When similar groups in America must rely on government support for upwards of 80% of their funds, it is unrealistic to expect these similar organizations in Russia to survive without a significant financial infusion from the public sector.

In light of this reality, and the lack of fundraising planning to date, CF must act immediately.

With the assistance of its American partners, develop a "Russia sensitive" fundraising plan to include: 1. Developing a large network, nationally, of dues paying members. At present, CF has a database of more than 150 possible members based on CBO and NGO client groups. CF will then need to develop a bimonthly newsletter to be sent to members, and other member services.

2. Developing sales of printed materials it has produced. It should assemble a catalog of materials with a price list and easy ordering instructions.

3. Selling, to nonmembers, subscriptions to a substantive newsletter.

4. Developing fundraising events and strategies that will build a base of givers from the small pool of charitable givers that CF can reach. Also CF should begin to nurture charitable giving, and expand its universe of givers on a regular basis.

5. Exploring the feasibility of obtaining ownership of real estate or venturing into a for-profit subsidiary that would generate funds for CF.

6. Applying for grants from the numerous foundations, corporations and foreign government agencies that are funding Russian efforts.

7. Utilizing the president to be more of a fundraiser. At least one third of his time should be dedicated to fundraising activities.

8. Perhaps the American Partners would be willing to set up a fundraising effort in the US for the Citizens Academy. There should be many individuals and institutions that would contribute funds to promote grassroots democracy in Russia.

New York City-based nonprofit community housing and organizing groups depend more heavily on government support than similar nonprofits in cities and states that do not provide such a high level of financial support. These organizations, particularly those in the Southern United States, may be better fundraising models for Russian NGOs. I would suggest the American partners contact Ms. Carol Abramson at the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, at 804-371-7100 for examples.

#### G. Other Comments:

1. CF needs to define victory. In other words, what will Russian society look like, when CF can say, we have achieved our goals, let's close down the organization. CF should then assume it will have a life of 20 years. That vision of Russian society, pertinent to community organizing, and the anticipated 20 year organizational lifespan should then become the basis for CF's planning strategizing. This will help to further focus the organization. It will also create a sense of urgency that will force out extraneous issues and projects.

2. CF sees their project as an effective model for other communities. The evaluator agrees. The mission and approach could be utilized in any of the emerging democracies of the NIS. It is also needed in many of these countries. A key problem, of course, is sustainability. This must be a goal from the beginning, wherever this project would be attempted.

Most of the how-to manuals and training modules could be adapted to other countries as well. They would need to be adapted for the local situation, with Moscow-centered aspects removed.

3. If conditions remain unchanged, CF could collapse when the grant program ends in the Spring, 1997. Fundraising planning and training must be the top priority for the remainder of the grant period.